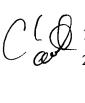# CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for initiation of an agreement utilizing a network, comprising the steps of:

(a) allowing a buyer and a seller to negotiate terms of trade utilizing a network;

(b) receiving from the buyer a form indicating the terms of trade utilizing the network;

(c) receiving an identifier from the buyer utilizing the network;

(d) sending the form to a bank for assessing the credit of the buyer utilizing the network, wherein the bank to which the credit application is sent is based on the identifier;

(e) forwarding the form to a seller along with the assessment of the credit of the buyer utilizing the network;

(f) allowing the seller to digitally sign the form utilizing the network;

(g) receiving the digitally signed form from the seller utilizing the network; and

(h) transmitting a notice to the buyer indicating that the digitally signed form has been received from the seller, thus initiating the agreement.

2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the network includes a wide area network.

3. A method as recited in claim 1, and further comprising the step of authenticating an identity of the buyer prior to sending the form to the bank.

4. A method as recited in claim 3, wherein the identity is authenticated by requiring the submission of an identifier and a password.

5. A method as recited in claim 1, and further comprising the step of verifying the credit of the seller.

1   6.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the form is a combined purchase

2   order proforma invoice.

1   7.   A computer program embodied on a computer readable medium for initiation

2   of an agreement utilizing a network, comprising:

3   (a) a code segment for allowing a buyer and a seller to negotiate terms of trade

4   utilizing a network;

5   (b) a code segment for receiving from the buyer a form indicating the terms of

6   trade utilizing the network;

7   (c) a code segment for receiving an identifier from the buyer utilizing the

8   network;

9   (d) a code segment for sending the form to a bank for assessing the credit of the

10   buyer utilizing the network, wherein the bank to which the credit application

11   is sent is based on the identifier;

12   (e) a code segment for forwarding the form to a seller along with the assessment

13   of the credit of the buyer utilizing the network;

14   (f) a code segment for allowing the seller to digitally sign the form utilizing the

15   network;

16   (g) a code segment for receiving the digitally signed form from the seller

17   utilizing the network; and

18   (h) a code segment for transmitting a notice to the buyer indicating that the

19   digitally signed form has been received from the seller, thus initiating the

20   agreement.

1   8.   A computer program as recited in claim 7, wherein the network includes a

2   wide area network.

1   9.   A computer program as recited in claim 7, and further comprising a code

2   segment for authenticating an identity of the buyer prior to sending the form

3   to the bank.

10. A computer program as recited in claim 9, wherein the identity is
authenticated by requiring the submission of an identifier and a password.

11. A computer program as recited in claim 7, and further comprising a code
segment for verifying the credit of the seller.

12. A computer program as recited in claim 7, wherein the form is a combined
purchase order/proforma invoice.

13. A system for initiation of an agreement utilizing a network, comprising:

(a) logic for allowing a buyer and a seller to negotiate terms of trade utilizing a
network;

(b) logic for receiving from the buyer a form indicating the terms of trade
utilizing the network;

(c) logic for receiving an identifier from the buyer utilizing the network;

(d) logic for sending the form to a bank for assessing the credit of the buyer
utilizing the network, wherein the bank to which the credit application is sent
is based on the identifier;

(e) logic for forwarding the form to a seller along with the assessment of the
credit of the buyer utilizing the network;

(f) logic for allowing the seller to digitally sign the form utilizing the network;

(g) logic for receiving the digitally signed form from the seller utilizing the
network; and

(h) logic for transmitting a notice to the buyer indicating that the digitally signed
form has been received from the seller, thus initiating the agreement.

14. A system as recited in claim 13, wherein the network includes a wide area
network.

15. A system as recited in claim 13, and further comprising logic for
authenticating an identity of the buyer prior to sending the form to the bank.

1   16.   A system as recited in claim 15, wherein the identity is authenticated by
2   requiring the submission of an identifier and a password.

1   17.   A system as recited in claim 13, and further comprising logic for verifying
2   the credit of the seller.

1   18.   A system as recited in claim 13, wherein the form is a combined purchase
2   order proforma/invoice.